

Latest Books

Jews Are A Dancing People. By Florence Freehoff. Stark-Rath Publishers, 71 pp., illustrated. \$4.75.

Florence Freehoff, well known dancer and dance leader of the San Francisco area, recently published a book on the Jewish dance. It is beautifully and expensively put out with reading matter, particularly on the Biblical period which also includes reproductions of prints on Biblical dancing drawn in 1690. There is a good section on basic steps and a section on Biblical instruments. Of dances there are but seven most of which are choreographies and none have piano music accompaniment. It is by no means complete or anywhere near it, but, as one reviewer said, "A key to Jewish dancing," an inkling of the rich Jewish heritage in the dance field. The name is also ambiguous. The Jews are a dancing people but there are others who are by far more of a dancing people than the Jews were even in their happier days. And . . . which people, except for a few fundamentalist American Christian sects, are not a dancing people?

This book and *Dance Of The Jewish People* by Dvora Lapson, would go well together. They are not competitive but complimentary to each other. One has some background, and fundamental steps and techniques while the other has the dances, 27 in all, \$2.00.

THE JEWISH HOME BEAUTIFUL. By Betty Greenberg and Althea Silverman. Women's League Of The United Synagogues Of America. New York. Illustrated, 135 pp. \$3.00.

This is only a cook book, but what a cook book! A treasure for folklorists. Not only does it give unusual and delicious food and pastry recipes but it also gives historic background of holidays, customs, how to properly decorate the table for each holiday, suggestions of songs, appropriate blessings for candles for each holiday, etc., etc.

Throughout the past centuries the Jews of Europe were subjected to every form of indignity: pogroms and massacres, stoning when appearing publicly, the required Jew-badges to identify them for insults, beard pulling, and so forth, made going to the synagogue not always a pleasant task. As a result the "synagog" was moved to the home and the table became the "altar" which necessitated the treatment with all due respects, particularly on holidays; lighting and sanctification of candles, sanctification over bread and wine, ritualistic hand washing, table songs glorifying the Holy Name of God, etc. The home became a sanctuary and God was worshiped in the beauty of holiness. We highly recommend this book, particularly to those who (like Jane Farwell) reproduce faithfully ethnic festivities. It gives complete details.

Comments & Letters

I can say that I am very pleased and thrilled with this fine publication (VILTIS). I especially appreciate the historical background material on the dances, the folklore and the reviews. I am much interested in securing back issues of VILTIS. Will you let me know how many are available and the price? (We have no complete file, but five dollars will secure a great many back issues. VFB).

CLARENCE BARNHART
Dayton, Ohio

FROM THE ORIGINATOR OF SILENCIO, TANGO PORQUE, ETC.

I agree that it would be a good idea to put so called ballroom dances on programs for random dancing, but, very few dancers in this area would know what to do except to follow a familiar routine. It takes more practice and thought to do a good random dance than to follow a routine. Very few dancers can think of more than four or five figures and repeat same every time so that it becomes a personal routine. I haven't noticed anyone teaching random polka, schottische, csardas or other nationality dances. Why do we need to set our dances apart? Did it ever occur to you that we could be creating our own dance lore at the present?

And let us put the responsibility of ballroom dancing in the folk dance movement where it belongs. We have been doing acknowledged ballroom dances from other countries for a long time. Speaking for myself, after about five years of folk dancing, I became somewhat tired of doing uninteresting and monotonous English tango routines which had been accepted because they were from another country. The music was not typical and was more suitable to a two-step. Then someone brought out a Tango Waltz! In this situation, Silencio was presented as a random type Tango with a good flavor. It was immediately accepted and after four years is still being taught and enjoyed.

There is no question in my mind that we are going too far and retaining too little. There are many good dances we do not have time to do any more. I believe that we can use a few dances created by contemporary composers. I agree that rehashes are useless and cannot understand the frenzy with which they are accepted. The time has also come to call ourselves international dancers so that we can logically accept all kinds of dancing. The ethnic groups can do as usual, but the mass dancers here want to try everything. If we are to continue as pure folk dancers, we must discard many dances already accepted and contained in our teaching manuals. Any dance using closed ballroom position is not a folk dance. That is where the line must be drawn. So let's make up our minds and be strong enough to demand a show-down once and for all.

GLENN STUBBLEFIELD
Emeryville, Calif.

IRISH REPRESENTS LITHS

This month the Public Library (Denver, Colo.) had a program on Christmas customs. Alice Nugent was in charge and asked Fay (of French extraction) and Dru (of Irish) Ferree to do a Lithuanian Christmas. We dressed in our Lithuanian best and presented our part as though we were Liths telling about our Christmas. I used your magazine (Lith issue of Christmas, 1954) for my talk and also for my guide for the tree ornaments. Really had fun experimenting with the straw drinking-straws, made a few birds from egg and nut shells and put on the ornaments on a small tree, topped by a cross on top. It really caused quite a bit of comment. I took the tree afterwards to my church and to the Steel Community Center and each time people enjoyed it very much.

Thanks so much for putting the Lithuanian Christmas in your magazine—it was a big help and it made me know and appreciate the arts of another country.

DRUCILLA FERREE
Denver, Colo.

We subscribe to other magazines, but VILTIS is the only one my wife and I read from cover to cover and enjoy every bit of it.

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VILTIS

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If not, do so now.
Remember VILTIS is the only magazine wherein you will find ethnic news, Lituanistica, background material and a wealth of information not found in any other magazine. Aside these merits it is the friendliest paper through which all are friends and brethren. TWO dollars per year for SIX ISSUES. FIVE dollars for THREE YEARS.